

# **Ballot Measures Defined**

## **INITIATIVES**

Often referred to as “direct democracy,” the initiative process is the power of the people to place measures on the ballot. These measures can either create or change statutes (including general obligation bonds) and amend the California Constitution. If the initiative proposes to amend California statute, signatures of registered voters gathered must be equal in number to 5% of the votes cast for all candidates for Governor in the most recent gubernatorial election. If the initiative proposes to amend the California Constitution, signatures of registered voters gathered must be equal in number to 8% of the votes cast for all candidates for Governor in the most recent gubernatorial election. Initiatives must qualify for the ballot 131 days before a statewide election. An initiative requires a simple majority of the public’s vote to be enacted.

## **REFERENDUM**

Referendum is the power of the people to approve or reject statutes adopted by the State Legislature. However, referenda cannot be used to approve or reject urgency measures or statutes that call for elections or provide for tax levies or appropriations for current expenses of the state. Voters wishing to repeal a legislatively adopted statute must gather signatures of registered voters equal in number to 5% of the votes cast for all candidates for Governor in the most recent gubernatorial election within 90 days of enactment of the bill. Referenda must qualify for the ballot 31 days before a statewide election. Once on the ballot, the law is defeated if voters cast more “no” votes than “yes” votes on the referendum question.

## **LEGISLATIVE BOND MEASURE**

Any bill that calls for the issuance of general obligation bonds must be adopted in each house of the State Legislature by a two-thirds vote, signed by the Governor, and approved by a majority of voters to be enacted. Whenever a bond measure is on a statewide ballot, an overview of California’s bond debt is included in the ballot pamphlet. Legislative bond measures must qualify for the ballot 131 days before a statewide election.

## **LEGISLATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

When the State Legislature proposes an amendment to the California Constitution, it is known as a legislative constitutional amendment. It must be adopted in each house of the Legislature by a two-thirds vote, and approved by a majority of voters to be enacted. A legislative constitutional amendment does not require the Governor’s signature. Legislative constitutional amendments must qualify for the ballot 131 days before a statewide election.

## **LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE AMENDMENT**

When the State Legislature proposes to amend a law that was previously enacted through the initiative process, it is required to present the amendment to voters on a statewide ballot unless the original measure permits legislative amendment or repeal without voter approval. Legislative initiative amendments must qualify for the ballot 131 days before a statewide election.

**SUBJECT TO COURT  
ORDERED CHANGES**